GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
AGRICULTURE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1833
ANSWERED ON:09.03.2010
INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURAL BIO-TECHNOLOGY
Biju Shri P. K.

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is contemplating private investment in agricultural bio-technology;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the measures being taken to ensure the participation of the civil society organisations to determine the desirability of the private investment in agricultural bio-technology?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS)

(a) to (c): The National Policy for Farmers, 2007 acknowledges that frontier technologies like Biotechnology provide opportunities for launching an evergreen revolution capable of improving productivity on a sustainable basis. In order to ensure social inclusion in access to new technologies, non-governmental organizations and private sector research and development institutions would also be included under the National Agricultural Research System, which would be restructured so as to effectively address the problems faced by small and marginal farmers.

The National Biotechnology Development Strategy (NBDS) was approved by the Union Government in 2007 after a nationwide consultation process with multiple stakeholders including ministries concerned, universities, research institutes, private sector, civil society, consumer groups, non-government and voluntary organizations and international bodies. In a major departure from normal funding mechanisms, it has been decided to invest up to 30% of the budget of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) in Public-Private-Partnerships schemes by the end of the Eleventh Five Year Plan to promote innovation, pre-proof-of-concept research, accelerated technology and product development in Biotechnology related to various sectors including agriculture.

Accordingly, the DBT is undertaking basic Research & Development (R&D) in anticipation of getting technologies for translation and agricultural biotechnology is included among one of focus areas of R & D. The focus of R & D in agriculture area is on three main staple crops viz. rice, wheat & maize, followed by pearlmillet, groundnut, pigeonpea and cassava. After success of Biofortification programme in main staple crops, Phase-II programme on pearlmillet, groundnut, pigeonpea and cassava for alleviating micronutrient deficiencies is planned to be taken up. The DBT is engaged in delivering on the commitments effectively with the help of multiple stakeholders from the public and private space.

The details of projects sanctioned by DBT in the agriculture sector under its schemes of
(i) Small Business Innovation Research Initiative (SBIRI) and
(ii) Bio- Technology Industry Partnership Programme (BIPP) are at Annexure I and II respectively.